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hen I transferred from HSL-51 in Atsugi, Japan, to a new command, I felt more than ready for my second tour in a LAMPS squadron. I had more than 1,000 hours in the SH-60B and had been redesignated as an assistant NATOPS instructor before I transferred. After two months in the squadron, still getting oriented, I became a junior crewman after one of the crewmen went down for medical reasons. I'd like to think that I volunteered for the counter-drug ops, but it really was more a case of sending the new guy. I thought it would be another cruise like all the rest. I didn't realize there's a difference between the operating procedures for East and West Coast squadrons, but I was about to find out quickly.

As usual, we started the cruise with the monotonous tasks of updating all of our quals. The DLQ period started without a flaw, comms were good, TACAN was up, and everyone knew what was going on. On our first approach to the boat, I reviewed my before-landing checklist and was all set for the ride.

I heard the call, "over the deck edge," and watched through the cargo-hook hatch as we came up over the rapid securing device (RSD). I

Show Me Where It Says That

by AW1 (AW) Mark Compton

sat back and listened to the forward and aft calls from the pilot. I didn't hear anything from the LSO. At HSL-51, the LSOs did all the conning into the trap, all the way down to the deck. That wasn't the case here, but as the new guy, I didn't want to ask questions, just watch and learn.

The MO called and told me he was ready to land. I thought, "Why is he telling me? Tell the LSO." I rogered up and waited for him to land.

He asked, "How do we look? Can we land?"

"Yeah, sure, go ahead and land," I said. "It looks good." I still didn't understand why he had insisted on asking me. We landed, took off for another approach, and nothing was said about what had happened. On the next approach, the MO again told me to call closure for him, something I never had done in my previous squadron. He had to refresh my memory on calculating closure. No big deal—I called altitude and closure for the approach.

Again I heard "over the deck edge," and I rogered up, expecting the LSO to give the forward and aft calls. Nothing again. Then the MO jumped all over my case about using "NATOPS terminology" when I'm conning them in as opposed to "looks good" and "yeah, go ahead and land." By now, I was confused and irritated, because I know you don't find calls by the SO over the trap anywhere in NATOPS. The LSO always is tasked

with the conning. I ended up giving him the calls into the RSD, and once we landed, the conversation quickly evolved into a heated argument. Convinced that I should use NATOPS terminology, the MO argued his point. I asked him to show me the NATOPS section for ICS terminology by the SO in conning over the trap. He couldn't.

We debriefed the flight and discussed this complete breakdown of ACT skills and the differences of flying East Coast and West Coast style. Later, I discovered that most East Coast squadrons have the SO do the conning. But have you ever tried doing the conning from the rear, keeping the RAST probe's position in sight, while still remaining in a crash position over the deck? Crewmen have asked that question many times. Most of them will say you have to unlock your inertia reel and lean over to the side to see down the cargo hole, hardly a good crash position.

I raised these points during our debrief, and we discussed them at length. I learned that even though I was the new guy at the squadron, I needed to be more assertive. Not knowing the differences in how the squadrons operate was a setback for me, but we identified some valuable lessons to help pilots and junior crewmen know what to expect. We agreed that during the final approach to the back of the ship is no time for confusion. 🦅

AW1(AW) Compton flew with HSL-48.